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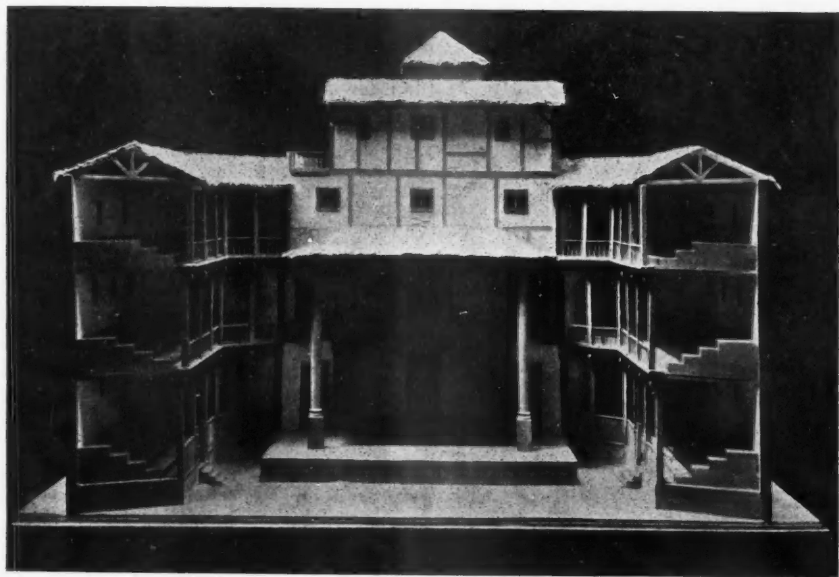
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JANUARY M·CM·XXV

Number 44



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DRAMA

JANUARY M·CM·XXV

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

WILLIAM ARCHER

IT is a melancholy coincidence that finds this page of our journal occupied for the last month of the old year and the first of the new by an Obituary. Stewart Headlam is followed to the grave by William Archer—two men who, in spite of many differences of outlook and temperament, were alike in their valiant loyalty to the best in the theatre.

Others will write, and have already written of the career of William Archer as a whole, of his varied interests, extending during forty years of active life, and of the part he played in that revolution in dramatic taste of which his translations of Ibsen's plays were at once the symptom and the inspiration. We write of him here as we knew him, and as a helper of the League whom it will be impossible to replace.

Archer was a man who suspected enthusiasm. Not because he lacked that quality in himself, but because he feared and resented it when uncontrolled by intellect. Although for the past year a member of the League's Council, he was never an attendant at its meetings. Yet confronted with any specific problem on which his help or his advice was sought, Archer never failed us. Disappointed with the long delays attendant on the National Theatre project, he even turned to the League as a possible instrument for hurrying matters on, and his ideas on this subject are incorporated in a Drama League pamphlet which was issued anonymously but whose authorship there is now, alas, no reason to conceal.

Archer was, as we all know, a by-no-means uncritical admirer of the Elizabethan Theatre. But he was a devout Shakespearean, and one of his last services to the League was to supervise the making of the Mr. Hembrow's model of the Globe Theatre which was shown last year at the

League's theatrical section of the British Empire Exhibition. His last public appearance was also made as a Drama League lecturer at the Century Theatre in November, when in the course of a discussion on the inferiority of the lesser Elizabethan dramatists, he spoke of Shakespeare with a fervour which will long be remembered by all who heard him.

To a new generation of critics Archer's reticence may sometimes have appeared to imply a coldness of outlook which in our experience of the man was far from the fact. His was a sheer knowledge of his subject which few could rival, and which kept him from easy praise. He had a real sympathy with the amateur dramatic movement, though in speaking or writing of amateur work he never lowered his critical standard, nor did he scruple to apply to the amateur theatre the same touchstone of austere taste which he applied to the productions of the professional stage.

We have hinted that Archer was not by nature a "committee-man." He himself would never have laid claim to such a title. Yet he was remarkable for the sound commonsense which he would bring to practical questions of policy no less than to the more hypothetical problems of dramatic criticism.

His activities ranged wider than the world of the theatre. He had visited and written a book on modern India. He was a staunch and life-long supporter of the R.P.A. Rationalism was, indeed, for him a religion—a religion which did not perhaps give scope for the depth of feeling which he loved to conceal, but which did largely seem to satisfy and express that integrity of mind which will remain for those who knew him his most rare and memorable characteristic.

BERNARD SHAW

THE devout Shavian asserts the uniqueness of his master: "There never was a man like George Bernard Shaw" is the principal doctrine of his creed. As a matter of fact, there have been many like him, though there may have been none so great. Great writers are always rare, and great writers of comedy are perhaps even fewer than great writers of tragedy. Nevertheless, the geniuses of comedy do exist, or, to be more exact, have existed in the past; and Mr. Shaw, for one, is very much alive in the present.

Comedy may be said to begin where tragedy leaves off. Broadly speaking, any play or story which does not end tragically is a comedy; but there are as many varieties and degrees of comedy as there are varieties and degrees of humour, joy, or fun. There is intellectual comedy, farcical comedy, romantic comedy, and musical comedy. There is also dull comedy. No doubt there are also other kinds of comedy, but these are the most important.

The earliest writer of comedy, whose work has survived, is Aristophanes. He is the earliest Bernard Shaw. But he is Bernard Shaw with a difference. Aristophanes is not afraid to make a slave appear nobler than his master, to criticize the chief men in the State, or to cry for peace in the midst of war; but he is also a cynic, and reactionary, a conservative and a patriot. G. B. S. is an apostle of progress, socialism and other "advanced ideas"; and although Aristophanes and Mr. Shaw are alike in that they both make fun of faddists and cranks who dally with new movements and cults solely because of their newness, one sometimes wonders whether one of the quarrels of Aristophanes was not with Liberty itself. George Bernard Shaw might almost be Aristophanes re-incarnated, more highly evolved. He has similar humour and irrepressible gaiety of mind, but greater wit and infinitely more power of sympathy. He is Aristophanes without the Greek writer's coarseness, meanness, or vindictiveness—Aristophanes with sincerity, religious spirit and concern for humanity.

The laughter evoked by comedy, as George Meredith pointed out, should be laughter of the mind. In other words, the true material for comedy is ideas, and not

buffoonery or horseplay. Aristophanes, like many another writer, confuses coarseness and vulgarity with humour, and animal spirits with wit. There is nothing humorous about thrashing a rival, kicking a slave, falling down a staircase, or colliding with a portly gentleman when you turn a corner. Such things should awaken pity or concern before they awaken laughter. And lasciviousness and drunkenness are hardly funny in themselves, in spite of the fact that many people think they are. At the same time, it is possible to portray unpleasant qualities in a humorous spirit—as does Shakespeare—without merely guffawing at coarseness.

There is a sense in which comedy deals with manners, customs, foibles, external eccentricities, whereas tragedy deals with the soul. But this is not the whole of the truth. Comedy does deal to a considerable extent with details and even trivialities, but the best comedy, like tragedy, deals also with the human soul. "Major Barbara," "Under the Greenwood Tree," or "The Cherry Orchard," contain as much psychology as "Hamlet"—they paint as faithfully the human mind, human desires and emotions, and therefore they have to do with the "soul" as much as "Hamlet."

The essential quality in all comedy is lightness of touch—intellectual nimbleness. Comedy gaily skims the surfaces of life—lightly, superficially, humorously—but in a sudden flash of wit, or change in the situation, it penetrates to the heart of things, startling us with momentary glimpse of problems usually beyond our reach. Tragedy takes us out into the unknown; but the spirit of comedy implies that "*There is no God*" is as great a dogma as "*God is*" and as difficult to believe. Comedy should make us aware of human limitation and imperfection. We accept man as he is and smile at him. We do not look too deeply inward, save in sudden flashes of insight. We avoid metaphysics and speculation. We never pass beyond the edge of the world, as we do with romance and tragedy. We keep to what is known about ourselves and ignore the storms and whirlwinds which rage outside our little lives—ignore them, or give them only secondary importance as backgrounds. Comedy is the apotheosis of sane, practical, matter-of-fact humanity.

It has become an axiom of modern writing that a play or story should have laughter and tears mingled, and that the laughter and the tears should spring from equal depths and be of equal intensity. No one fulfils this rule more perfectly than Bernard Shaw. His laughter can play round a death-bed with perfect naturalness and propriety; and you never know, even in his most sparkling scenes, when he may not bring sudden tears to the eyes. Tchekov—who might be called the Bernard Shaw of Russia—has not such a brilliant flow of wit as our own G. B. S., and his laughter and pathos are not so exquisitely blended. Tchekov is inclined to overdo the tears. His best comedies have a strong vein of tragedy, and one of them, "The Seagull," though styled a comedy, is a tragedy in the strictest sense of the word. On the other hand, Tchekov sometimes lapses into farce, as in "The Proposal."

It would be fruitless to discuss whether tragedy or comedy is the "higher" form of art. Each has its place and use, and each is better than the other in some respects. Tragedy stresses the depths of our nature; but comedy plays with light and shade and is the subtler form of writing. Modern tragedy is inclined to over-emphasize disaster and sometimes overlooks the new life which springs up after a catastrophe. Tragedy is too much in love with death and bloodshed and loves to meditate morbidly upon the "ponderous and marble jaws" of sepulchres. But the spirit of life passes on and dwells elsewhere. Tragedy seeks the living among the dead, when the dead themselves are risen.

Even when souls are thwarted and efforts wasted—through their own fault or the fault of others—it is possible that in other lives and other times they may have their chance of happiness again. Or, if this be an idle dream, it is at least more certain that the force of life will create other souls, better souls, souls strong enough to overcome the obstacles and hostile forces which proved too powerful for their weaker forerunners—souls able to conquer life and make themselves masters of life's sweetness. It is of the weakness of tragedy that few things are really tragic. The only real tragedy is to deny the goodness and power of life. That is why comedy makes a stronger appeal to popular sympathy.

The earliest comedies were to a large extent satirical. Reforms were sometimes suggested, or attempted, by means of railery or ridicule. Charles Dickens is an Aristophanes without coarseness and with pathos and human feeling added; but he is too great a caricaturist to be a true writer of comedy. The best comedy shuns satire and caricature as completely as it shuns buffoonery—it unites wit with good-humour, divorces laughter from bitterness, and embodies the spirit of perfect kindness. Real comedy is the distilled sweetness of the heart, the essential playfulness of the mind. For light-hearted comedy without caricature the Elizabethans are almost unrivalled. Ben Jonson's lines:—

Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
Before rude hands have touch'd it?
Have you mark'd but the fall of the snow,
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?

express the true spirit of comedy.

The years following the restoration of the Stuarts to the English throne saw a revival in the art of comedy comparable to that which followed the great age of Greek tragedy. Puritanism, which put a period to the Elizabethan school of drama, found its nemesis in the dissolute comedies of Congreve and Wycherley, Dryden and Etherege, whose influence persisted in Steele, Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Smollett, Sheridan and other writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The plays of Oscar Wilde marked an important stage in the development of modern comedy, but Oscar Wilde has been followed by many greater than he though none more brilliantly paradoxical—men like Mr. Pinero, Sir James Barrie, J. M. Synge, who was supremely great and whose "Playboy of the Western World" is at once perfect tragedy and perfect comedy.

It is true, then, that there have been many Bernard Shaws, from the days of ancient Greece to our own time. But perhaps the greatest of them all is Mr. Shaw himself. For purity and brilliance of wit, for laughter and tears in balanced proportion, for kindness and truth, light and shade and poetry, depth, breadth, and height, triviality and profundity, he excels all others. He is the finest Bernard Shaw who has ever written a comedy.

G. BASEDEN BUTT.



THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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Telephone: GERRARD 8011.

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

IT will be remembered that the Council of the League was requested by the Liverpool Conference last October to collect evidence on the methods adopted in the reading of plays by private societies as distinct from performances thereof. A quantity of evidence was collected from various societies and sent to the League's solicitor, Mr. E. S. P. Haynes, who has procured for us an opinion on the whole question from Mr. MacGillivray, which is printed on the opposite page of this number. It seems likely from this opinion that no legal distinction can be drawn between a play-reading and a performance, and therefore if payment of fees is to be avoided it is evident that play-readings must be given in the same circumstances which would render a performance a private and domestic one within the meaning of the Act.

This raises a serious problem both for dramatists and for play-reading circles. Negotiations have been opened with the Authors' Society, and it is hoped that we may be able before long to announce some kind of working agreement which will obviate a continual fear on the part of play readers that they may be laying themselves open to attack, and at the same time relieve playwrights of the sense that they may be suffering injustice or worse. Meanwhile it is hoped that play-reading circles will realize the obligation which is laid upon them to do nothing to contravene the law in this matter.

On January 7 was given from 2LO the first of a course of fortnightly Drama League lectures on the History of the Theatre. The recitals commence at 9.40 p.m. and the first was a lecture by Miss Elsie Fogerty on Greek Drama, accompanied by vocal illustrations by Mr. Lewis Casson and actors from the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art. On January 21 Mr. Ben Greet and his players will speak upon and illustrate "The Religious Plays of the Middle Ages."

On February 4 Mr. Bridges Adams will arrange a talk on "Shakespeare and his Theatre," and on February 18 the Phoenix will provide a XVIIth Century Recital. The following two recitals will be given by Mr. Nigel Playfair and the Students of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art respectively. The last of the series, on April 1, will be given by Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth on the New Amateur Movement.

The Manchester Unnamed Society have sent us their interesting "Unnamed Book," which is a record of the aims and methods of the Society since its foundation in 1916. Mr. Stanley Jast, Mr. Sladen Smith and Mr. Eric Newton have collaborated in a most entertaining text and the book, which is published at 2s. 6d., has numerous illustrations, some in colour, which should be very instructive to all interested in the Little Theatre Movement. Copies may be obtained from the Drama League.

IS A PLAY-READING A "PERFORMANCE"?

By E. J. MacGillivray

IN my opinion a reading of a dramatic work by several persons taking parts is an "acoustic representation" of the work. I should so construe the definition of "performance" in Sec. 35 (1) of the Copyright Act, 1911, if it stood alone. It was clearly intended that you could have a performance appealing only to the ear and from which the visual representation of the dramatic action was eliminated. Further light is thrown on the meaning of performance by the exception contained in Section 2 (1) (VI). It is there declared that it is not an infringement of copyright for one person to read or recite in public any reasonable extract from any published work. The inference is that a reading or recitation in public of the whole work or of anything beyond "a reasonable extract," is an infringement and *a fortiori* if a number of persons take parts and the work is a dramatic work.

In my opinion the method of reading the work is quite immaterial. The crux of the whole matter is whether or not the reading was in public. That is a very difficult question to answer in many cases. There are clear cases on either side of the line. Where membership of a dramatic society is open on application or upon formal introduction to any respectable person in the neighbourhood and such persons become members mainly for the purpose of attending dramatic readings as an audience and the readers are only a small minority of the members, I have no doubt that the performance is in public and that fees ought to be paid and none the less so because there is no charge for admittance and members only are admitted to the place where the reading is held. It is quite true that the damage to the author's professional performing rights may be nil, but that is not the test. If the reading is "in public," he is entitled to be the judge of his own interests in the matter. A performance is "in public" when the public generally or any section of the public is expressly or impliedly invited to join the audience either with or without payment. It is none the less in public because these members of the public who wish

to attend have to go through the formality of being elected members of a society in the first instance. I should imagine that the * * * Club is a Society of this kind and that the readings at meetings at the Royal Hotel, * * * are readings in public. As there are some three hundred members, I think the inference is that there is an implied invitation to any resident in * * * who is interested in the drama to become a member and thus acquire the right to attend the meeting.

On the other side of the line there are unquestionably many dramatic societies which are of a strictly domestic and private character, as where a number of friends form a society and meet in one another's houses to read plays. In such cases there is no sort of invitation to the public. No one is admitted a member except on the terms of mutual friendship. It is clear that such a society may read plays without paying fees. It is quite possible, however, for such a society to develop into a society of a public character and the point where it crosses the line is difficult to determine. Where the readings take place in a public building it is reasonably clear that the line has been crossed, and so in any circumstances where there is an implied invitation to the entire neighbourhood to apply for membership and attend the readings as members.

In my opinion one essential element of public performance is that there shall be an audience which in substance is a public audience. The invitation to the public must be directed to them as potential members of an audience, either as members of a society or otherwise. So that unless a substantial number of the members of a dramatic society have joined it for the purpose of listening to readings and not merely for the purpose of taking a part in such readings there would not be a public audience and the readings would not be performances in public. In my opinion when substantially the whole of the members present at a meeting are taking part in the reading and there is no appreciable audience

apart from the performers the reading cannot be a reading in public. Into this category would fall a large number of small societies formed among village communities, church congregations and the like. It would include too (I imagine) play-reading circles or classes in Educational Settlements. I think it is quite clear that a class of students at a school or university may read a play amongst themselves without paying author's fees, and I do not think there is any difference in principle where the class is formed *ad hoc*. It must, however, be a genuine class of students, adult or otherwise, and the members must therefore be so limited as to permit of substantially the whole class taking part, either in the performance themselves or in the subsequent discussion and criticism. A "class" of (say) more than thirty or forty members one would look upon with suspicion as being possibly a mere cloak for giving readings to which the public were invited to form an audience as nominal members of the class.

There must be a large number of societies whose status is debatable ground. It is the character of the society which is the real test. If the number of members is small and the primary object is the holding of meetings at which all can take a part in the reading and discussion an occasional reading jointly with another society would not make the performance public nor would the performance be public if there were an occasional reading or even a stage performance to which members and their friends only were invited to form an audience. A public reading to which the general public were invited would be a public performance even although no money was taken.

If opinion were desired as to the rights of any particular society, it would be necessary to provide full information as to:—

1. The condition of membership.
2. The number of members.
3. The place of meeting.
4. The character of proceedings at each ordinary meeting.
5. Whether at ordinary meetings there is a substantial audience apart from the readers.
6. The publicity given to the transactions of the society.

(Sgd.) E. J. MACGILLIVRAY.

Temple, 8th December, 1924.

THIRTEEN AT THE THEATRE

A Schoolboy's Impression

HOWEVER busy anybody is I am sure that they will never regret having made the time to visit Drury Lane this Christmas, to see Mr. Basil Dean's production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." I thoroughly enjoyed the performance, although one or two of the actors and actresses seemed to be slightly out of place. Bottom was one of them in the first half of the play, although he was very good when "translated" into an ass, and especially as Pyramus in the last scene. Miss Mary Clare, as Hippolyta, seemed rather unnatural, and unaccustomed to speaking verse; however, she seemed much better in the wood scenes in the second part of the play. Mr. D. Hay Petrie was a marvellous Puck, and, as usual, he was my favourite actor, but I thought that one of the most remarkable performances of all was that of Mr. Miles Malleson (Snout) who, although he had practically nothing to say, amused the audience just as much as, if not more than anybody else. He made an excellent "Wall," and manœuvred the "chink" in a very amusing manner.

Miss Gwen Ffrangcon-Davis (Titania) was very good and the part seemed to fit her very well. I did not especially like the "Singing Fairy," but I greatly enjoyed the songs of Titania, and I wished that they were more numerous.

The Fairies and Ballets were very pretty, and I liked them both very much, although at times Oberon seemed slightly unfairy-like in the middle of the others.

The sunrise in the last scene but one was very effective. I think that it would have been even more successful if the back curtain had not been hanging quite so loosely, as there were a number of folds in it, which caused a number of ugly, and very unnatural, shadows. I greatly enjoyed the whole performance; more than any other Shakespearean play I have seen. I enjoyed the last scene most of all, especially because the whole story was brought back into my mind when the fairies gathered together in the room of the palace and danced at the end.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THE BOURNEMOUTH DRAMATIC AND ORCHESTRAL CLUB.

The Club entered on its sixth season in September, 1924, with a membership of about five hundred. The programmes for its monthly "at homes" have been as follows:—

Friday, October 2 (afternoon and evening).—
"I'm Sorry—It's Out," "A Minuet," "Cupboard Love," "Felix's" Dancing Class" (ballet),
"Martha Plays the Fairy."

Friday, October 30 (afternoon and evening).—
"Quinney's."

Friday, November 28 (afternoon and evening).—
"The Witness for the Defence."

Ten members of the Club assisted as fairies in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "The Merry Wives" during a recent visit to the theatre of the Charles Doran Shakespearean Company.

Owing to the increase of members and guests the "at homes" will in future be run in three performances, on Friday and Saturday evenings and Saturday afternoons.

The programme for the rest of the season includes "The Watched Pot," "A Night at an Inn," "The Land of Heart's Desire," "Seven Women," "Struwwelpeter" (ballet), "Much Ado about Nothing," and "The Romantic Young Lady."

MRS. FRANK WORTHINGTON'S MATINEES.

Mrs. Frank Worthington's matinees are well known. This year she gave two in favour of charity which, with donations, netted £2,549, and one in support of the Primrose League that also brought in a substantial sum. Her *modus operandi* is one that should interest readers of DRAMA, as she always selects an unacted play. This year her choice fell on a romantic play, "The Soul of Paris," by Olive Lethbridge, and, judged by the standard of romantic plays, the author has nothing to be ashamed of. The dialogue is good, there is a welcome comic interlude in the third act, and though the plot takes a leap backwards of twenty-five years in the second act, it is not difficult to follow. On Mrs. Worthington's shoulders fell the heavy burden of playing the heroine, who reverts from 42 to 16 and returns at the end to her original age. It is no slight tribute to her talent to say she was equally convincing in either part, and in speaking her lines she showed a rare consistency which might well have been copied by some members of the cast. Though all amateurs with one exception, they adequately filled the bill, and their diction collectively was admirable. It would be an object-lesson to not a few modern mummers and mumblerers. One would like especially to single out Lieut.-Col. Kennard, who had obviously devoted his long stay in France to mastering the gestures of the French peasant. The one professional, Mr. Treven Grantham, made a very satisfactory hero, in spite of the slightly disconcerting fact that one of his incarnations, the Duke of Rudimere, was shared with another actor. Charity often covers a multitude of sins, but Mrs. Worthington's troupe had no reason to shelter their performance behind any such excuse. They were strong enough and good enough to be judged on their merits.

C. B.

GORTON.

The four performances, concluding on Saturday, of the play "St. Simeon Stylites," by the Gorton Amateur Dramatic Society, were in the nature of an experiment. It is not too much for a producer to submit plays lively in incident and rich in colour to an audience and ask that they shall be acclaimed, but to present what is next door to a philosophic monologue is a hazard which is double-edged, for, as well as the possibility that the play may make no appeal, there is always the chance that the company may fail to differentiate between subtle moralizing and just a string of clever speeches; in other words, the difference between feeling and speaking and just speaking.

This is the task Mr. F. E. Burgess had confronting him when he invited the public of Gorton to the Town Hall. The fact that the experiment was successful proves that Gorton is ripe for more of this type of play, and suggests that the day may not be far distant when Gorton shall possess artistes of the calibre of those famous amateurs associated with the Stockport Garrick and the Unnamed Societies.

THE BENTON PLAYERS, YORKSHIRE.

The above Society opened their season of 1924-25 by producing Jerome K. Jerome's "The Passing of the Third Floor Back." Extensive alterations have been carried out this season in regard to the stage and lighting equipment, and these helped considerably towards the success of the production.

The whole of the scenery was made and arranged by the Craftsmen's Section of the Society.

There were crowded audiences at all the performances, and everyone pronounced the effort as a great success.

FOLK HOUSE PLAYERS, BRISTOL.

The dramatic performances of four one-act plays by the Folk House Players last Friday and Saturday showed that the company has greatly improved in technique and a sense of comedy.

Under the clever tuition of Mrs. F. W. Rogers they are making great strides forward, and must now be recognized as a band of amateur players who always achieve interesting results. Of the four plays produced, the first was the only one that lacked cohesion; but this was probably due more to the play—"Thirty Minutes in a Street," by Beatrice Mayor—than the players. It recalled Gertrude Jennings' clever little sketch, "Waiting for the 'Bus,'" and is brightly written but difficult to act.

"A Fool and His Money," by Laurence Housman, is a play with an arresting quality that holds the spectator. Two rogues waylay the Fool on his way home, carrying his wages of £50, after five years' service with a hard master. I have nothing but praise for the two rogues and the manner in which the gradual awakening of the conscience of one was portrayed.

"The Storm," a realistic little drama by John Drinkwater, followed. Once again the acting was remarkably good, and nothing could exceed the realism of the howling wind and the storm raging round the cottage on the mountain. The stage

management deserves much credit for making the spectators in the front row feel cold, as well as "creepy," during the play.

In refreshing contrast to this tragic little piece was Lady Gregory's "Hyacinth Halvey." Packed with wit, the sparkling dialogue punctuated with enchanting Irish expressions, the play went with a spirit that delighted the audience. Every member of the cast did well.

"EAGER HEART" AT CATFORD AND CAMBRIDGE.

Miss Buckton's beautiful mystery play, "Eager Heart," was presented at St. Andrew's Hall, Catford, S.E., from December 7 to 16, under the direction of Mr. Gilbert Hudson. Many improvements were made upon last year's production, and crowded audiences witnessed the eleven performances. The following appreciation is quoted from the *Kentish Mercury* for December 13: "It would be impossible to imagine more effective presentations than those at St. Andrew's Hall: beautifully clear diction, a quiet restraint in action, appropriate and not too elaborate scenery, artistic dressing, lighting effects which are really well managed (notably in the vision of the Holy Family and the vision of Angels), and some delightful carols and other music by an unseen choir and orchestra."

Under the same producer four performances were given in the Guild Hall, Cambridge, from December 16 to 18, and made a deep impression on large audiences. Undergraduates and local ladies gave effective renderings of the parts, while the Master of Sidney and the Dean of Pembroke shared the duties of prologue and epilogue.

THE VALLEY PLAYERS.

On December 9 the Valley Players produced "The Far Away Princess," by Rostand, at Corbridge, a village in Northumberland.

The play was well received by a large audience. The part of Melissinde was excellently played, and the rest of the cast were adequate. "The Far Away Princess" commends itself to amateur production by its literary beauty, the directness of its action, and its remarkable theatrical effectiveness.

The play is only the second effort of this newly-formed group of players, who are, for the most part, quite inexperienced. Their first production was "Prunella," by Laurence Housman and Granville-Barker.

LANCASTER FOOTLIGHTS CLUB.

The Lancaster Footlights Club has just completed its fourth annual double public venture by presenting, at the Grand Theatre, Lancaster, November 24 to 29, three performances of "Milestones" (Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblock) and four performances of "The Taming of the Shrew."

Miss Cassidy, who was the stage manager for the former play, is to be congratulated on her successful production of "Milestones." Mr. C. R. Tomlinson, the stage manager of "The Taming of the Shrew," has given great pleasure by the artistic version of "The Shrew" which he gave to the Lancaster public. This is the Club's first venture in playing Shakespeare, and its reception confirmed the Committee's choice. Members of both

casts worked well, and showed ability and improvement.

The Lancaster Footlights Club has a membership of 450, holds monthly play readings, gives one public productions week and one private triple or quadruple bill annually. In addition to the acting members there are many non-acting members, who show the keenest interest in both the Club's public and private performances, thus justifying the Club's formation and the British Drama League's aim—to create and foster a love of the Drama.

BOARD OF EDUCATION CO-OPERATIVE THEATRE.

At the Guildhall School of Music, just before Christmas, this company gave two performances of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." It was their first full-dress production (the organization was only founded, it will be remembered, last April), and gave evidence of talent in the various branches of the enterprise which bodes well for the future. *Hermia* and *Helena* were both played with simple grace, which is the way they should be played; and *Demetrius* and *Lysander* had both a similarly right conception of their respective characters. *Oberon* was, perhaps, miscast. There were other players who had clearly a greater sense of poetical expression than the actor who played this part, and *Oberon* is nothing if not poetry. The Clowns were really excellent, playing well to each other and leaving little to be desired in the matter of interpretation.

NATIVITY PAGEANT PLAY.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION AT BIRKENHEAD.

Beechcroft Settlement has gained considerable fame for its summer open-air pageant plays, and has this year made an innovation by producing a Nativity Play, which was performed in the Little Theatre at Birkenhead last week. The story was presented in six "pageants": (1) Nazareth, (2) the Hills of Judea, (3) a Street in Bethlehem, (4) Following the Star, (5) Herod's Court, (6) the Stable. It was an attempt to present the "old, old story" in simple language and setting, and succeeded in reaching the hearts of the spectators as more elaborate performances might well have failed to do.

The play was written, arranged, and performed by students of the Settlement, strictly on community lines. The keynote of the production was given by the dramatic director in her speech to the players, when she reminded them that the chief actor was the baby, who did not appear.

The performance was done before dark curtains which made an effective setting for the action. The music included well-known hymns and carols and Gounod's "Ave Maria." An atmosphere of simplicity and reverence marked both players and audience, and made the event one to be remembered. There was no applause.

Over 1,300 people saw the play during the six performances, and about 150 were engaged in the production in various ways. Many churches had announced the production to their people, and all types of religious thought were represented in the audiences.

Laura Smithson

L.R.A.M., Elocution Double Diploma.
Of the "Old Vic." Shakespeare Co., and
principal West End Theatres. Director of
the Stratford-on-Avon Shakespeare Festival
Summer School of Elocution 1913-1920,
and of Folkestone Summer School of
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THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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What the League is :

- (1) A Federation of Societies and other Organizations working for the development of the Drama as an art and as a social and educational force.
- (2) A Union of Individual Members, Professional and Lay, who desire to give or to receive help in any matter connected with the Art of the Theatre.
- (3) The only Organization in the country ready to deal in a practical and disinterested fashion with any Theatrical problem which may arise.

Membership entails the following among many other privileges :

- (1) The right to consult the League's Information Bureau on all questions relating to the Drama.
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- (4) Free Receipt of the League's monthly magazine and notification of all Meetings, Lectures, etc., organized by the League.
- (5) The knowledge that you are helping in the movement for a better and a freer Theatre.

For further particulars apply to the Hon. Secretary, 10 King Street, Covent Garden, London, W.C.

The League will move into its new premises at 8, Adelphi Terrace, early in February.

A Reading and Writing Room will be available to members without extra charge, and access to the shelves will be given to students and those desiring to read plays or books on the Theatre.

